

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY

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STADIS//////////

FOR MOREY BELL FROM BUNKER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PN PFOR MARR

SUBJECT: DEFENSE RESPONSE TO PRESIDENTIAL MEMO ON CANAL

1. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE RESPONSE TO MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT FROM SECRETARY RECEIVED TODAY. IT IS BETTER THAN WHAT WE BELIEVED WOULD BE FORTHCOMING AND I BELIEVE WE CAN LIVE WITH IT. BOWDLER AND OTHERS HERE CONCUR. TEXT FOLLOWS:

QUOTE: (U) THIS MEMORANDUM PROVIDES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS ON THE MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON THE ABOVE SUBJECT.

(S) THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT CONCURS IN THE RECOMMENDATION IN THE MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT, PROVIDED THE PROPOSED NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION MEMORANDUM (NSDM) STIPULATES A MINIMUM DURATION PERIOD OF 50 YEARS FOR CANAL DEFENSE.

(S) THE SECURITY INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES REQUIRE A SECRET

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MILITARY PRESENCE ON THE ISTHMUS OF PANAMA FOR THE LONGEST

POSSIBLE TIME BECAUSE:

- THE NEED FOR THE CANAL TO ASSURE INTER-OCEAN PASSAGE FOR US NAVY AND OTHER US GOVERNMENT VESSELS TO SUPPORT

STRATEGIC WAR PLANS HAS NOT DIMINISHED NOR CAN A DIMINUTION OF THIS REQUIREMENT BE FORECAST.

- PANAMA'S LONG HISTORY OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY SUGGESTS A LONG-TERM DURATION FORMULA FOR CANAL DEFENSE TO SAFEGUARD OUR NATIONAL INTEREST IN THAT AREA.

- SOVIET AND CUBAN INTERESTS IN THE HEMISPHERE POSE POTENTIAL SECURITY PROBLEMS FOR PANAMA AND THE CANAL.

(S) THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE RECOGNIZES THE NEED OF THE US NEGOTIATOR FOR FLEXIBILITY ON DURATION TO REACH AGREEMENT ON OTHER MAJOR ISSUES, AND ULTIMATELY TO OBTAIN A TREATY; APPRECIATES THE PANAMANIAN SENSITIVITY TO THIS TOPIC; AND UNDERSTANDS THE RISK OF A CONFRONTATION WITH PANAMA, SHOULD NEGOTIATIONS FAIL OR FALTER AT THIS TIME. THERE IS SERIOUS CONCERN WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT THAT A REDUCTION BELOW 50 YEARS OF THE DURATION FOR DEFENSE OF THE CANAL WOULD ENCOUNTER STRONG CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION. THEREFORE, THIS DEPARTMENT CONSIDERS THAT THE PERIOD OF TREATY DURATION FOR CANAL DEFENSE SHOULD NOT BE LESS THAN 50 YEARS, AND THAT EXISTING PRESIDENTIAL GUIDANCE ON THIS POINT SHOULD REMAIN AS CITED IN NSDM 131 (13 SEPTEMBER 1971).

(S) IT IS URGED THAT ANY CONCESSION ON DURATION OF CANAL OPERATION, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM CANAL DEFENSE, BE ACCOMPANIED BY MAJOR CONCESSIONS BY PANAMA ON COMPENSATION, LANDS AND WATERS, AND STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT COVERAGE FOR CANAL ADMINISTRATION US CITIZEN EMPLOYEES.

(S) THE DEPARTMENT ENDORSES THE OBJECTIVE SET FORTH IN THE DRAFT NSDM TO SEEK FROM PANAMA A POST-TREATY US MILITARY PRESENCE.

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(S) THE DEPARTMENT CONSIDERS THAT THE NSDM PROPOSALS PRESENTED ON CANAL EXPANSION PROVIDE THE NECESSARY FLEXIBILITY TO ACCOMMODATE NATIONAL INTERESTS. UNQUOTE

2. LAND USE TALKS NOT DEVELOPING AS FAVORABLY AS WE HAD HOPED BUT WILL PROBABLY BE ABLE TO SEND YOU MORE DEFINITE WORD BY MONDAY.

3. WILL TRY TO REACH TACK IN MIAMI TOMORROW TO INFORM
HIM OF PANAMA SECTION OF SECRETARY'S SPEECH IN HOUSTON
SATURDAY. KISSINGER

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